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ABSTRACT

The author discusses the implications of the administrative team concept in three dimensions. The first dimension is the local school level, where concern over middle management involvement in educational policy decisions becomes more significant as employee groups organize to negotiate school policies with the board of education. In the second dimension, the various State administrator associations are shown to be confronted by the dilemma of implementing the team concept despite potential conflicts of interest. The third dimension concerns the national administrative association where the emphasis is on professionalism, entailing less danger of conflict of interests. (Author/WM)

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TOPIC: HOW CAN WE MAKE THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM CONCEPT COME ALIVE?

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The term "administrative team" is not new in education parlance. If we but examine the literature dealing with school administration, we will find frequent reference to the administrative team. However, a multitude of events in the past twenty-five years, yes even the past ten years have given the administrative team concept new importance and new meanings and have made the implementation of the concept imperative if our system of education is to survive.

As we recall the development of the American educational system, it is easy to understand why a rather authoritarian hierarchy was spawned. The first legislative authority and responsibility for education was expressed in the Massachussetts law of 1642. This law required the parents and masters to instruct children in the principles of religion and the capital laws of the country. With the aura of religion built into the law and the high incidence of illiteracy in the land, it is small wonder that the task of instructing the children fell to the minister. The minister as the leader of church was accorded almost divine authority in the community. As the instructor of the children, the minister transferred this divine respect to the head of the school. In 1647 a second law requiring each town to set up a school or pay a fine came into being. This law not only gave the school status as a governmental agency, but established the authority of the state to provide and control public education.

With the growth of the school, the task of instructing the children became too demanding for the minister to handle, in addition to his other duties. The School Master became the teacher and from the minister inherited a position of authority. Continued growth led to schools with a number of teachers and systems of a number of schools. A natural progression of authority resulted and prevailed for many years.

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School administration did not emerge as a profession for some two-hundred years. In the early years of the 20th Century, Paul Hanus and E. P. Cubberly pioneered in the university teaching of educational administration. The mid-century saw great changes. Prior to this time, superintendents acquired knowledge from their experience or that of other practicing administrators. Principals learned and received their instructions from superintendents. The teachers received direction from principals.

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By 1950 approximately 90 universities were offering doctoral work in school administration and several thousand were offering programs leading to a Master's degree. In 1970 the research Division of the N.E.A. learned that 15,000 classroom teachers would compete for 203 administrative jobs open in the state of New York, and that in the 39 states studied some 600,000 teachers held Master's degrees in school administration and were eligible to move into administrative positions.

In 1973 almost without exception the members of the administrative team, the superintendent, the principal, the assistant principal, and the supervisor, are educated, well-trained, experienced educators. The quality of the membership of the administrative team as well as many social reforms in recent years have led to a new interpretation of the administrative team concept. In 1973 the administrative team is made up of a group of professionals cooperating to solve educational problems and administrate the schools.

My assignment this afternoon, to discuss, "How We Can Make the Administrative Team Concept Come Alive", includes at least three dimensions: The local school level, where concern over middle management incolvement in educational policy decisions becomes more accute as more and more employee groups organize to negotiate school policies with the Board of Education; The state administrator association level where the various associations must find ways to implement the team concept in spite of potential conflicts of interest between different groups; And the national administrative association level where the emphasis is on professionalism, and thus entails less danger of conflicts of interest.

There are two primary parties involved in the leadership of a school district. The first is the Board of Education, whose responsibility it is to establish policy. The second is the members of the administrative team, including all administrators, who face a dual responsibility: First to advise the Board of Education in its establishment of school policies, and Second, equally important, to effectively implement those policies adopted by the board. If the administrative team is to be vitalized, the board of education, the superintendent, the principals, and the central office staff must each recognize not only the limitations of its own authority, but the rightful authority of each other group.

Today our society is a society of pressure groups, some genuinely dedicated, some with axes to grind, The Board of Education and the superintendent continually are subjected to local power structures, and attempts to politicalize the school system. The Board of Education faces new and ever increasing pressures from organized teacher groups, community groups, parent groups and newly formed student organizations. The temptation is great to yield to these pressures.

However the Board of Education members must resist pressures. If a Board of Education member is ill, he will consult a doctor. If he is in court, he will consult an attorney. He employs an accountant to make out his income tax. Why then should he forsake the expert for the layman when seeking advice on educational issues. Lay pressure groups are often emotionally involved in some phase of the problem, or may in some cases have an axe to grind. The members of the administrative team are professional people. They are obligated to view every issue in the light of the entire school system, and are dedicated to serving the needs of boys and girls.

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If the administrative team concept is to be implemented, the Board of Education must recognize the responsibility of the team to advise them on policy issues, and must avail themselves of the expertise of the administrative staff. On the other hand the administrators must be aware that their function is advisory. The Board of Education is the final authority in policy decision making. In the final analysis the board is responsible to parents, the students, and the entire community.

The administrator has the right to expect that his input will receive careful consideration by the Board of Education. He does not have the right to dictate policy. It must be understood that at times the board will reach decisions counter to the recommendations of the administrators. However the administrators must never lose sight of their obligation to administer all board policies regardless of personal feelings.

The role of the Administrative team as educational advisors entails grave responsibilities. The welfare of boys and girls must always be the prime concern of the team. They must never allow personal gain or predjudice to sway their council. As educational experts they must be willing to conduct extensive research. They must be sure that they give the board valid information upon which to base decisions.

A close, harmonious working relationship between the two afore-mentioned parties is obviously vital to the successful operation of a school system.

The principal is torn between his allegiance to the central administration and his desire to retain an effective working relationship with the teachers in his building. There are many principals who blame teacher negotiations for their present dilemma. Teachers do not feel that principals can represent their point of view since they are administrators; thus principals feel neglected by teacher groups. Moreover the principal is not given an opportunity by the superintendent to actively participate in the negotiation process and principals have found that items negotiated by the board representatives and the teachers actually reduce or eliminate their authority and power to run their schools. As stated by Moody, principals fit into a type of no-man's land.

In many cases this nominal involvement is the result of the increased activity of teachers and other school employee groups organizing and bargaining directly with the board of education. These groups negotiate items that affect not only their wages, hours, and fringe benefits, but more importantly as far as principals are concerned, also the very heart of the internal administration of the school system. In too many cases, teachers and employee groups and other factions within the community have completely bypassed the school principal in negotiating with their boards, matters that directly or indirectly affect school policies and the principals.

An effective administrative team provides a collective means of strengthening a school district's leadership by giving individual administrators needed assistance, opportunities and job satisfactions. The administrative team must be represented in the negotiation process. This representation comes either through a seat on the Board of Education's negotiating team or through representation in an advisory capacity.

Some school districts prefer to maintain an informal structure within the administrative group. One of the primary purposes of this type of organization

is to keep communications open through an administrative council in which all administrative units are represented. The effectiveness of this organization depends on the devotion of the superintendent to the team concept and upon his personal effectiveness with the board of education. In other districts, administrators have felt it necessary to resort to collective bargaining procedures to gain recognition. In still other districts, administrators have been able to combine the best features of the formal and informal bargaining positions mentioned above. This approach stresses working through the internal administrative structure to influence decisions affecting educational programs, but employ a formal agreement with the board of education to insure basic economic benefits and desirable working conditions for administrative employees.

Since superintendents as well as board of education personnel change, I wonder if it would not be well for those administrators blessed with cooperative superintendents and professional boards of education, to seek formal recognition in economic and welfare areas before a crisis arises.

For the state administrator organizations, the implementation of the administrative team concept offers additional challenges. The structure of state organizations generally assumes one of four patterns, depending on the size of membership and potential membership. Some large state groups feel that they can function independently of other state organizations, and still serve the needs of their membership. In other states, joint administrator organizations including superintendents, principals, supervisors and others in one organization have been formed. In other states umbrella organizations, featuring individual organizations for each administrative unit and a congress of administrative organizations, have come into being. And in a very few states, the administrator organizations are still affiliated with the state teacher associations. Regardless of the organizational pattern selected, two principles must be adhered to. The identity and autonomy of each administrative group must be preserved and each national administrative organization must be strongly supported.

It is generally agreed that membership services of state associations should include legal council, legislative lobbying, aid in negotiation, and direct advocacy in times of stress. These services may lead to misunderstandings within both joint associations and umbrella organizations, unless procedures for handling conflicts between members are included in the structure.

The various administrative units will in most cases be in complete agreement regarding the initiation, support of or opposition of specific legislation. However, at times some administrative unit may disagree with the majority. Such conflicts can destroy the team if provisions for such a crisis have not been made in advance.

The constitutions of most organizations state the action of the joint group will be the will for the majority, but that any dissenting group is free to actively oppose or support an issue.

The principles of advocacy may lead to tensions between unit or members within the organization unless such conflicts of interest are anticipated. State organizations must be structured to meet two types of stress. They must have the machinery to resolve conflicts between member groups within their organizations, and to deal with disputes between members and non-members.

The philosophy of the association cannot be right or wrong in defending the member, but rather must be that the role of the association is to study, recommend, advise, and try to help both advisories reach a just and amiable settlement. However, there may be times when the association may find it necessary to bring sanctions to bear against a member or a non-member.

There are several techniques that an association can employ to resolve administrative conflicts: Staff members may be asked to study the problem; Staff members from involved organizations may work together or with association members; Association members, usually from another school district, may be asked to help resolve conflicts involving fellow association members; Or formal hearing may be held by a board made up of staff persons and association members. Regardless of the techniques employed, no form of sanctions should be applied until all rights to due process are scrupulously observed.

In "Resolving Management Conflicts Through Associations", Shannon outlines due process right of an individual as including: The right to a written accusation; The right to counsel; The right to knowledge of the evidence to be used against him: The right to trial by his peers; The right to question witnesses; The right to present witnesses; The right to a written decision; The right to a transcript of proceedings; And the right to a fair judgement under all the facts and law of the case. A State Association must assure these rights.

The problems of implementing the administrative concept at the national association level is much less filled with pitfalls and is in fact well underway. Generally speaking, membership services afforded by a national association are of a professional nature, and less subject to conflict.

For the past two or more years, the executive secretaries of the large national professional associations have been meeting on a regular basis in quest of ways to work even more closely together. Our organizations attempt to further implement the administrative team concept through a joint conference of executive secretaries from those state organizations affiliated with AASA, NASSP, and NAESP. At this meeting it was agreed that the Boards of Directors of the three organizations would be asked to direct their executive secretary to find ways to work together in the areas of status and welfare programs, legislative thrust, in-service training programs, and research.

Yes, nationally the implementation of the administrative team concept is well under way.

A committee to study administrative relationships under the joint sponsorship of AASA, AASPA, NAESP, NAASP and NCAWE has been formed. The purpose of this committee is to delineate the structure, procedures and guidelines that will enable national administrator organizations to advance professional standards and relationships and resolve disputes and controversies involving members. Although internal conflicts will seldom, if ever, reach the national level, pre-planned techniques are necessary if ever needed. National organizations must look upon the resolving of conflicts between members as a very minor function. Conflicts should be resolved at a local or state level.

A second project finds AASA, NAESP, NSPRA and NASSP investigating the possibility of pooling research funds to create some type of cooperative enterprise which could handle all or nearly all the research and information-gathering activities of the separate organizations. This new agency could be controlled by some type of subordinate committee providing appropriate representation for each of the sponsoring organizations. It could be left open-ended to accomodate additional associations in the future. This study is insured of success, since Sam Lambert, a man who has broad experience in the research field, is assisting in this study.

A third team effort is a joint attempt to formulate a code of ethics for administrators. Progress is reported on this study.

I hope that I am not misunderstood. I would be the last to state that membership service of a national administrator association is limited to professional services. Rightfully our membership looks to our national association for professional leadership, but they look to us for insurance programs, legal advice, leadership in negotiations, legislative thrust and image building as well.

Unionism poses a threat to both state and national associations. The first target is the principal. The past few years the principals have found themselves faced with a new situation in education. They have been confronted by new local power structures, and the politicalization of the school system.

The superintendent and the board of education face new and ever-increasing pressure from organized teachers, community groups, parent organizations, and student organizations. Legislative bodies have removed mandates applying to administrator salaries, tenure and working conditions. The superintendent finds his own security in danger. He can no longer protect the interest of his professional staff.

Today, the principal, supervisor, director, and even the counselor, find it necessary to bargain for his rights. As a first step, organized local administrators' associations have become the rule. These local organizations are looking for state and national affiliations.

The School Administrators and Supervisors Organizing Committee of the AFT-CIO has moved to offer such affiliation. Local Chapters have been charted in more than a dozen major cities. The charge to the chartered cities is to spearhead a drive to organize school administrators and supervisors throughout the nation.

I fear that if our state and national administrator associations fail to meet the membership's needs in the area of status and welfare, S.A.S.O.C. will, and some members may turn to administrator unions.

In closing, may I say that I believe the administrative team concept will come alive if administrators at all levels truly believe in the concept, if each understands his right and responsibilities under the concept, and if they mutually respect each other.

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